

Meeting Date: July 23-24, 2008

Agenda Item No. 12

Agenda Item: Department Draft White Sturgeon Management Plan (Action)

Bureau Chief Approval: _____

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Background: Snake River white sturgeon have declined across their historical range in Idaho for a number of reasons. The natural range of white sturgeon in the Snake River is from Shoshone Falls near the city of Twin Falls, Idaho downriver into the Columbia River. The Fisheries Bureau has prepared a Draft Management Plan for the Conservation of Snake River White Sturgeon in Idaho. This draft plan summarizes historical and current information on Snake River white sturgeon. It describes their status with respect to abundance, trends, and an evaluation of limiting factors to the species. We present management objectives in the plan that will be implemented in collaboration with key partners such as Idaho Power Company, whose responsibilities relate to relicensing of its Snake River hydropower system. This brief presentation will provide an overview of the management objectives the Department proposes to implement to enhance the conservation status of Snake River white sturgeon. The Fisheries Bureau seeks approval from the Commission to solicit public review of this draft plan.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues: The Draft Management Plan for the Conservation of Snake River White Sturgeon in Idaho describes how the Department intends to manage and conserve this unique and important game fish as per its mission embodied in Idaho Code Section 36-103. The Department's strategic plan has a goal to "Improve public understanding of and involvement in fish and wildlife management." This draft plan sets management direction and provides objectives for conservation. The Commission sets policy and provides direction, considers input from the public, and has the authority to adopt, amend, or reject Department-recommended plans. The Fisheries Bureau intends to seek Commission approval of the Snake River white sturgeon management plan in late 2008. Prior to taking any action on the merits of this management plan, public review and comment is necessary.

Public Involvement Process: To date, there has been no public involvement in developing this draft plan. We are seeking Commission approval for a 30-day public review period. Following this public comment period, the Fisheries Bureau will analyze and summarize results for the Commission for future action on this management plan for Snake River white sturgeon.

Staff Recommendation: The Fisheries Bureau seeks Commission approval for a 30-day public comment period on this draft plan.

Justification: The Commission sets policy and provides direction, considers input from the public, and has the authority to adopt, amend, or reject Department-recommended plans. In order for the Commission to consider adopting this document as an official Department species management plan, public review and input is necessary.